

A new Director for Taronga

The new Director of Taronga and Western Plains Zoos, Dr John Kelly, took up his position on October 12, 1987. The RZS would like to welcome him to his position, and thought that our members might be interested to know a little about his background.

Dr Kelly, who is married with four children – three daughters and a son – was born in Lismore, and did his degree in Veterinary Science at the University of Sydney. After graduating, he worked in a large animal practice in the Hunter Valley before returning to Sydney to do a Ph.D. in Immunology. As well as his research, he lectured in the School of Veterinary Science, becoming an Associate Professor.

During this time he became very involved in overseas aid work, and spent most of the University holidays abroad – chiefly in Indonesia – working on the Australian Overseas Aid Programme. Though this was fairly isolated work, Dr Kelly found he had time to write research papers, and even began a book, which was finished when he returned to "civilization".

He moved away from direct contact with animals when he went to the Australian Development Assistance Bureau in Canberra in 1980. This appointment brought him into the field of policy and management aid. Dr Kelly was policy advisor on aid matters to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. He moved to the Premier's Department in Sydney, where he headed two branches, and was much concerned with policy work and management issues concerning the Public Service generally. Then came the move to Consumer Affairs as Assistant Director, and now to Taronga and Western Plains as Director.

Dr Kelly says he sees the Director's post as both a scientific and an administrative one, and aims to assist his staff in planning for the last decade of this millennium.

Grant Acknowledgement . . .

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He has been appointed initially for a five year term, on secondment from the Public Service.

Where will the Zoo be in the 1990's, and what will be its role? Dr Kelly feels the direction should be towards research which is both broad-based and relevant; and that the promotion of improved communication, both within the Zoos and outside, with other departments, will be vital. He wishes to provide stimulus and motivation both to his staff, and associated departments and institutions, and to increase links with such places and organizations as CSIRO, the Universities, the RZS etc.

The Zoo is becoming a complex commercial enterprise which possesses great possibilities, especially as tourism within Australia is growing rapidly. At present – astonishingly – only 16% of people coming through the gate are foreign tourists, and most of this 16% are from New Zealand. This provides a great challenge as we aim to provide a venue which will attract a far greater proportion of our overseas visitors – NOT by providing a Wonderland-type park, but by a fascinating, challenging, modern, educational – and attractive and inviting – place which makes visitors flock through the gates to see the animals and plants in Taronga and Western Plains Zoos. Of course, everything eventually falls back to the dollar – money will need to be spent to attract money, "ways and means" will be firmly on Dr Kelly's agenda.

As Dr Kelly said when I was talking to him: "All this after only two weeks!" We welcome him, and wish him good fortune in his new task.

Marianne Cochrane